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Phoenix: 1

Oh, damn. That was what I wanted to see.

They thought they were Gods and Goddesses. I was here to prove them wrong. Their faces were worth watching.

Tina and Luna Tamia's smiles were frozen. Kiara's mouth was wide open. And Luna Raya?

Ha-ha. She was the funniest one in the lot.

Tears welled up in her eyes, and so many emotions were playing on her face.

Fear, horror, and disbelief. I had never seen so many feelings on display on a single face.

"Hello everyone," I greeted them with a big smile, and could hear murmurs among the Alphas and Lunas.

Who is she?

Is she someone important?

She is so beautiful, even with that mask.

Even the last remark could not dampen my spirits.

I slowly turned my head to look at the man... the only one at this table who already knew that I was alive.

To put more drama into the situation, I decided that I wanted to sit beside him. I met his golden eyes, holding the gaze just long enough for him to understand.

And he did.

He gave a slight tilt to his head towards the empty chair next to him.

With a small nod, I walked right past the ladies and made my way to him, "Hello," I gave him a slight bow before slipping into the seat.

Then I glanced at Tina, whose eyes were still on me as if she couldn't believe what she was seeing.

I met her gaze with a silent challenge

Come on, Tina. Come and get your chair, sweetie.

I leaned back in my chair, cool and collected, and reached out for the glass of water in front of me like I belonged here and the glass was placed for me.

"So," I turned slightly to King Sebastian and smiled, "How is it going?"

I wanted to pat my back for being this confident. The rest of the guests had already started eating their dinner.

A soft smile tugged at the corner of his mouth, "You wanna know?" he leaned a little and brought his face closer to my cheek, "It was boring as hell," he whispered, and I couldn't suppress my giggle that erupted from my throat.

For a few moments, he was not King Sebastian but a friend. Or maybe my buddy.

And maybe your husband?

Out of nowhere, an inner voice reminded me, and that made my heart flip in my chest.

No, Phoenix. Don't tread on dangerous ground! I scolded myself, ignoring the cold sweat that broke out on my palms.

My train of thought broke when I found King Sebastian filling my plate while talking to an Alpha.

If I had gone on that date that night, would he have treated me the same way? Did I make a mistake by running away?

When Tamia and Tina were bullying me, I should have gone to him and told him everything. He might have protected me, and I'd still have my beautiful face.

"I was here to give you a painful life. It seems you're about to get a painful death," that was what Tina had said when she threw that powder on me.

Good Goddess. How could I forget that? All this time, I thought I had lost my face because of that chemical potion, which caused fire. Tina throwing that odd thing had slipped through my mind.

Jai had already warned me that I might lose my memory due to the trauma I faced. Or I might remember only a few things from my past later.

I raised my eyes to look at the group of women who were casting me mean looks while whispering to each other.

I looked away and focused on my plate. I couldn't let them win.

Sebastian, sitting right beside me, hadn't forgotten me. Every now and then, he'd gently nudge the platter towards me.

When I reached for the bread, his hand brushed mine... purposefully.

After a while, I felt his fingers wrapped around mine under the table. He didn't say anything and just kept rubbing his thumb lightly across my palm.

Oh, brother. The small motion alone was enough to mess with my heartbeat.

While the rest of the table might be busy laughing and chatting, he stayed mostly quiet, stealing glances at me like I was the only thing worth watching.

At one point, he lifted my hand slightly, turning it, eyes fixed on it like it was something sacred. And then...

And then he brought it to his lips.

Please, Sebastian. I pleaded with him silently, praying he'd stop before this became harder than it already was.

His lips pressed a soft kiss to the back of my hand again. The man wanted the world to know something I wasn't ready to show.

My eyes snapped to those evil women across the table – Tina, Tamia, and Luna Raya.

Their gazes were locked on us, and I could see the venom on their faces.

Poor Tina. She wasn't even blinking.

Her fiancé was openly showering his affection on another woman. Tsk.

They were watching us.

After Jai, King Sebastian was the one who didn't

let me feel invisible.

"Do you want to try these ribs?" he whispered, and I had to shake my head, trying to recover from the earthquake inside me.

That was when I felt someone else's gaze on my face.

I looked up and found Alpha Blake watching me from across the table, along with Beta Brian. Alpha Blake's eyes stayed on me for a moment longer before he gave me a polite nod, then he subtly gestured with his fingers: *Meet me after dinner.*

I blinked twice. It was a yes.

The pack came up with these hand and eye gestures because of me.

I had no idea what he wanted to talk about. However, one thing was confirmed. From now on, I will live in this pack on my own terms.

There would be no more begging for acceptance from my side.

I needed to remind myself that I wasn't here to please anyone anymore.

